

# OpenTheo

## More Sabbath Controversies (Part 2)



### **The Life and Teachings of Christ** - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg discusses controversial topics surrounding the Sabbath and healing in part two of his talk. He argues against a humanistic view of God that places healing as a top priority and emphasizes the importance of trusting God whether or not healing occurs. Gregg also addresses criticisms of Jesus' actions on the Sabbath and the reasons why some desired to kill him for not honoring him as the son of God. He concludes by emphasizing the importance of following Scripture and seeking honor that comes from God rather than from others.

### **Transcript**

...uncomfortable, and if pain and uncomfortableness is something that God just has no room for in his kingdom, and that a loving God could never allow his people to suffer such things, then he shouldn't allow persecution that's painful any more than he should allow sickness that's painful. It's obvious that God has something far more important on his mind than simply being concerned to relieve everybody's discomforts. Now, I'm not, I don't want to be taken too far the wrong way.

I believe God has compassion, that when he healed people he was moved with compassion, it says. And that God is a healing God. I believe in healing.

I simply am trying to counter a very humanistic and a very carnal attitude which masquerades as a Christian view, which basically elevates healing as one of God's top priorities, and we don't see it in the Gospels. We don't see it in the Bible. We see many healings, but the point is, Jesus certainly must have encountered a lot more sick people than the particular cases that are recorded.

We usually have a record of the people he healed without making reference to the people he passed over. Why? Because if he passed by a sick person without healing, there's nothing remarkable to record. The things that are recorded are the remarkable things.

There's occasions, however, where we have instances like this, where we're told there's a lot of sick people around, and we're told that Jesus healed one of them, and they left.

And, you know, there must have been other cases like that where it's not specified how many sick people around that Jesus didn't heal. Okay, now, I'm not trying to discourage you from asking God or even trusting God for healing, but I would say people need to trust God, whether he heals them or not.

And the Bible nowhere says have faith in healing, but it does say have faith in God. And faith in God means faith in him as a person, as a caring father, as one who will always do what's right and best and most merciful and loving, and there's certainly nothing wrong with asking him to heal you and asking in faith that he will heal you. If that's his will and if it's what's good for you.

But faith in God is different from faith in healing in this very respect. Faith in healing means you ask for healing and you basically put your faith in the idea that you will be healed. Faith in God means, though you may ask for healing or anything else, your faith is not so much in receiving the particular thing that you're wishing to have, although you believe very much that God is concerned about it and will do whatever he sees fit to do about it, but your faith is in him as a person, so that however he responds to your prayer, you trust him to do the right thing.

Now, I don't want to get off onto a tangent about this. Once I get saying these kinds of things, I always feel like I need to counterbalance it and counterbalance it. But I think I've made my position known previously to this enough that we don't have to belabor it.

What I will say is there were a lot of very needy people at this point and Jesus singled out one, healed him and went his way. And the other thing I want to point out is that he did it on the Sabbath day. Now, it's very unlikely that the Sabbath day was the only day Jesus spent in Jerusalem.

If he made the trip all the way from Galilee to Jerusalem, he probably spent a few days. I mean, it took a week to get there. If it was a major feast like Passover, he probably spent a whole week there.

Which means, since this guy wasn't going anywhere, Jesus could have found the same guy in the same spot the next day if he wanted to. He didn't have to do it on the Sabbath day, presumably. I mean, this is a very obvious point.

This guy had been there for 38 years. He'd be there tomorrow if Jesus wanted to wait until the Sabbath was over so he could comply with the Pharisees' requirements. The fact that he healed him on the Sabbath day is explained by the fact, of course, that he did whatever his father wanted him to do when his father wanted him to do it.

But his father's willingness matter demonstrates that God wanted there to be a confrontation over this Sabbath issue between Jesus and the Pharisees. Because that's what resulted from it and it could have easily been avoided by Jesus simply waiting until

the next day to do what he did. The fact that God did not leave Jesus to wait until the next day but to go ahead and do this on the Sabbath means that God was interested in getting in the face of the Jews over their bigotry and their misperceptions of what God had in mind with the Sabbath day.

And so he did. He made the guy well. Now, the first thing he said to the man is a little strange.

I mean, it seems a little strange because he said, Do you want to be made well? You'd think everybody would want to be made well. But maybe that's not true. Maybe Jesus was just trying to get the man to exhibit a little faith because the question would suggest, although it doesn't say it outright, that Jesus was there possibly to help him.

But it's also possible Jesus wasn't sure whether the guy wanted to be well or not or whether he wanted to badly enough. You know, there are people, believe it or not, you're probably not one of them, and you may not even be able to relate with them. But there are people who are so lonely and so friendless that it's only by being sick or claiming to be sick that they get anything like compassion or attention from people.

I heard about a woman who had a zip-on cast that she zipped onto her leg to go to church every time she felt like she was not getting enough attention. She'd show up on crutches with a zip-on cast and everyone would say, Oh, you know, what's happened? What happened to you? And then she'd get all the attention she wanted. I just heard on the radio the other day, someone from San Francisco, I was listening to a San Francisco station, that the homosexuals in San Francisco are not practicing so-called safe sex.

And they couldn't care less because in a sense they expect to get AIDS. They just figure it's a matter of time, and so why bother practicing safe sex, they say. Furthermore, it's almost a badge of being truly gay to have AIDS, they say.

And the other thing, the other thing it says is, this person on secular radio, this was on KGO, News Talk Radio in San Francisco, the reporter said, and many of them report that they like the attention they get once they get AIDS. Because there's an awful lot of publicity of the plight of people who have AIDS and so forth. And it's a, you know, you've got to be very sensitive to this disease, and you've got to be very compassionate to these people who are dying of AIDS and so forth.

And a lot of these people, in some respects, probably turned to a homosexual lifestyle originally because of lack of meaningful relationship, lack of loving support and nurture and so forth, from their families or somewhere else. And when they get AIDS, they suddenly get all the attention they want. Or maybe more than they had before.

I find that very interesting. I thought of this passage where Jesus said, do you want to be made well? Because it's possible that some people do not. And the same is very

probably true of people with demons.

Why do some people not get demons cast out of them? I think very possibly because some are not that interested in having the demons go. For some reason, maybe the powers they have or whatever they get, they don't want to part with. Anyway, it's an interesting question.

It's the only time in the Bible Jesus ever asked this kind of question of someone before healing them. He didn't say, do you believe you can be healed? He said, do you want to be healed? Very interesting. The man complains that no one can put him in the pool, and he's always not the first to get in, and so he never gets healed.

So he's been there for 38 years. And Jesus said, well then, rise, take up your bed and walk. Now, the man was criticized first.

It wasn't that they first criticized Jesus for healing. The problem arose because the man was carrying his bed, and he was criticized for carrying his bed on the Sabbath, that he was bearing a burden. Now, this is important to note.

Jesus commanded this man to bear a burden on the Sabbath, the very thing the law forbade. Jesus commanded a man to break the Sabbath on this particular occasion. Now, Jesus never commanded anyone to break the laws about adultery, murder, or theft, or bearing false witness, or honoring parents.

But he did command this man to do something that was unlawful to do on the Sabbath, to carry his bed. And the man was apprised of this violation. And the guy said, well, hey, I'm just following orders.

This guy told me to carry my bed. He healed me. I figured he's got some kind of authority to talk.

Who am I to say no to a guy like that? Now, they said, well then, who told you to do that? Verse 12. And he said, I don't know. Don't know who it was.

Jesus is gone. Must have been someone. I mean, it must have been someone more than ordinary, because he healed me.

Funny thing is, we don't really have this guy walking and leaping and praising God. As I said, he seems like one of the more dull characters in the stories of the Gospels, you know. He gets healed.

He's been there 38 years. Crippled. Couldn't move.

Guy walks up, totally out of blue, totally unexpectedly, and says, being healed. For the first time in 38 years, the guy's normal. He's just walking along, carrying his bed.

I mean, you'd think the guy would be a little more ecstatic, you know. Didn't even bother to find out who the guy was that healed him. I mean, at least while he was gathering up his bed, he could say, by the way, who are you? He didn't bother to ask.

He just kind of walked off. So Jesus looked him up. And Jesus found him in the temple.

And said to him, see, you've been made well. Notice he didn't say, your faith has made you well, as frequently Jesus says to people. He just says, see, you've been made well.

Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you. I've already commented on that statement. Very possibly a suggestion that the man had a known sin in his life that had paralyzed him physically.

It's not unheard of for such things to happen. For guilt, fear, you know, for psychosomatic illness to result in paralysis, or sometimes other things that are physical. The man departed and told the Jews that it was Jesus who made him well.

Now, I hardly think the guy was trying to get Jesus in trouble. I think he just wasn't smart enough to think it through. These guys are mad at me because I'm carrying my bed.

I'm doing it because Jesus told me to do it. Therefore, they're going to be mad at him. But they don't know who he is.

Therefore, I better not tell them who he is because it will get him in trouble. I don't think the thought process is linked up in his mind. I think he just, you know, just went off.

Yeah, I think his brain had been paralyzed for 38 years. Anyway, it says in verse 16, For this reason the Jews persecuted Jesus and sought to kill him, because he had done these things on the Sabbath. But Jesus answered them, although it doesn't mention them speaking to him.

It just says they sought to kill him. Whether that means they took up stones in their hands, as they did, it specifically states that they did this on some other occasions, like in chapter 10. That may have happened here.

It happened also in chapter 8. It just indicates that they determined or sought to kill him. They may have actually done something physical at this point to confront him and threaten him. But Jesus answered them, My father has been working until now, and I've been working.

Therefore, the Jews sought all the more to kill him because he not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was his father, making himself equal to God. Now, Jesus' statement was his self-defense for having healed on the Sabbath. He basically says, Hey, listen, anything my father does, I'll do.

My father doesn't do any wrong. And since my father works on the Sabbath, I see no

reason not to do it myself, if I'm doing his works. Whatever my father does, I do.

Now, that statement, of course, was tantamount to appealing to some kind of equality with God. At least an equality in mission, an equality in terms of the importance and priority of his actions, being equal to the importance and priority of God's actions. I mean, the Jews would not deny that the healing process, the natural healing process in the body, goes on seven days a week.

If you cut yourself on Thursday, your body would be healing itself on Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and for several days more until the cut was healed. God could be said to be healing in that way, through the natural means that he does so. And the healing would take place on Sabbath as well as any other day.

For that matter, God sends rain, and he sends sunshine, and he causes the crops to grow, and so forth, on Sabbath days as well as any days. God does his good things every day of the week. But the Jews would never fault God for that.

Certainly, God's actions, because he is God, take priority over any laws that God has made for man to keep. But Jesus was suggesting that his actions take equal priority for the same reason that God's do. God's my father.

I'm his son. I do what he wants me to do. I do his works.

I do the same kind of thing on the Sabbath. He does it on the Sabbath. In other words, I heal on days that aren't the Sabbath, and I heal on days that are the Sabbath, because it doesn't matter.

All days are alike. I do whatever my father wants me to do. If my father's working until now, including up until this very hour on the Sabbath day, I do the same.

He basically doesn't defend himself on the basis of saying, well, I really didn't do any work. I mean, I just spoke the word. I mean, if you or I had done what Jesus did and were brought to trial, we might be tempted to say, well, listen, isn't it kind of silly for you guys to say I worked on the Sabbath when in fact all I did was speak to the guy.

I didn't do any work. I didn't do any labor. I didn't lift any burdens.

We defend ourselves against the charge that we had really broken the Sabbath. Jesus basically admits that he broke the Sabbath. He basically admits that he did something that's considered unlawful on the Sabbath, but he does it because God has the right to do that.

And he's God's son, his apprentice, and he does whatever his father does. He does it the same way. This is why they took his words to be a tantamount to a claim to be equal with God.

Now, you and I can say that God is our father and that we are his children without the same implications. It's the whole context of the statement, I suppose, but the sense is that Jesus' claim was seen as being a unique claim, certainly different than the general claim that all people are God's children or that all Christians are God's children. Both statements are found in the Scripture, meaning different things in different places.

When Paul says, we are all his offspring to the Athenians, there is a sense in which all humans are God's offspring. He's their father, their creator. All Christians are God's offspring in a different sense.

And Jesus is God's offspring in yet another sense. And as you go through those three stages, it gets more specialized in meaning. And when Jesus claimed that God was his father and basically said, therefore, I'm above the Sabbath, just like God is above the Sabbath, and that what I do can preempt any requirements of the Sabbath-keeping, just like what God does preempt any requirements of the Sabbath-keeping, he's claiming an authority over the Sabbath that is equal to that of God.

That's how he's arguing. And therefore, they already wanted to kill him, but now they really wanted to kill him for two reasons. Not just because he broke the Sabbath, but because of the claim he made about himself.

And answering for himself in his actions on the Sabbath. Now, verse 19. Then Jesus answered and said to them, Most assuredly I say to you, the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he sees the Father do.

For whatever he does, the Son also does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all things that he himself does. And he will show him greater works than these that you all may marvel.

For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom he will. For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son. That all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father.

He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. Now, if Jesus had gotten himself in hot water by speaking of God as his Father in a general sense in verse 17, he certainly didn't talk himself out of trouble with the following statements. Especially in verse 23 where he said, Everybody should honor the Son, which obviously meant himself, even as they honor the Father, which means God.

Suggesting that the honor due to Jesus is equal to the honor due to God. And that people need to honor him as much as, to the same extent as, even as they honor God. Now that is not a minor claim.

He said that anybody who doesn't honor him, Jesus, is not honoring God. Which of course means that Muslims and Jews and anybody who takes a lower view of Jesus than the

Bible gives to him, though they may think they're honoring the God of the Bible, certainly the Muslims think that, and so do the Jews and so do Jehovah's Witnesses and several cults. They believe they're honoring the God of the Bible, but because of their refusal to honor Christ at the level that the Bible gives them position as equal to God, they are not honoring God.

They may think they are, but they're not, because they're not honoring the Son. Now, how Jesus began this in verses 19 and 20, with the exception of the last clause, or last two clauses of verse 20, from the point where it says, and he will show him greater works than these. Just before that, verses 19 and 20, is a segment that is sometimes called the parable of the apprentice son.

Now, if you're reading the same version I'm reading, you'll see that there are capitals in verse 19 on the word son and the word father and himself and he, and so forth, they're capitalized. This is because the New King James translators recognize this as referring to Jesus and God the Father. And they tend to capitalize words, even pronouns that refer to them.

But in the Greek, there's not this capitalization. That's a translator's preference. It is thought by some, and I agree with them, that up to a point, in verse 19 and up to about halfway through verse 20, Jesus is speaking generically about fathers and sons in general.

And in verse, of course he's doing it in order to make a point about himself and God, who is his father. But what he's saying is, my relationship with God is very much like the relationship that all sons bear to their fathers. In this particular respect.

Fathers, sons, do not know how to do anything by nature. Fathers show their sons how to do everything they have to do. Because the fathers love their sons, they show them how to do the work.

Now in particular, in that society, every father, or almost every father, there would be some exceptions, but the typical thing was for a father to train his son in the same trade that he had. Children didn't have to go to college, and parents didn't have to save up thousands of dollars to send their kids to college. It was assumed that if the father had a profitable trade, whether he had a farm, whether he had a shop, whether he was a tradesman like Joseph, a carpenter, that that father, in order to guarantee his son a profitable existence in adult life, would teach him the trade and leave him the business.

And of course if he had more than one son, more than could run the one business, at least all of his sons would learn the trade so that they could do the same kind of business and support themselves. It was an apprenticeship that every son had to his father. And that's what, when Jesus says in verse 19, Moses surely said to him, the son, I take that more generically, any given son that you might consider in that society, can do



nothing by himself.

Jesus wasn't born knowing how to hammer nails, knowing how to put together, you know, boxes of wood and carve ox yokes and things like that. A child isn't born with instinctive knowledge about those things, he has to learn it. The son can't do anything of himself, with reference to his father's trade, but he does what he sees his father do.

Now this was the case, Jesus no doubt himself, as a child, would go into the carpenter shop and watch how Joseph did things, how he handled the tools, how he used the tools, how he cared for the tools, and he learned how to work with wood in exactly the way Joseph did. If Joseph was a poor workman, Jesus would have learned poor skills. If Joseph was a careful and skillful workman, Jesus, the son, or any son, in such a situation, would learn to be skillful and careful and excellent in his work.

Because sons don't naturally know these things, they learn the trade from the one they apprentice under, who was their father. And he says, since the son doesn't know everything instinctively, he does only what he sees his father do. And whatever his father does, the son does it in like manner, he just learns to do it just the same way as dad does it.

And he says, in verse 24, the father loves the son, and shows him all things that he himself does. Now the father wouldn't go out to his competitor down the road, who's doing the same business, and show him all his trade secrets. If he learned some shortcuts, or if he learned some ways to do the job better than the next guy, he wouldn't show it to his competitor down the road, but he'd show it to his son.

He loves his son, he shows his son everything he does. All of his little trade secrets, all of the shortcuts he's learned, all of the ways to perfect the job. Whatever the father does, the son learns to do it exactly the same way.

Now, having made that a general parable, he of course applies it to himself and his relationship with God. But we should point out to you, that the statement he makes is actually a fairly flattering statement toward Joseph. Because Jesus spent the first 30 years of his life, not as a preacher, but as a carpenter.

And he learned carpentry from a man, just like most men learned it from men, their fathers. Joseph was not Jesus' biological father, of course, he was only his foster father, but Joseph apparently taught Jesus the trade. And Jesus knew a father figure in Joseph.

And I think that for him to say that the father loves the son, and shows him all the things that he himself does, tells us a little something about Jesus' upbringing, about his relationship with Joseph. That Joseph was a godly and conscientious father, and taught him how to do things the way that he did. Interestingly too, when Joseph knew that Jesus was the Messiah, he might have felt, well, why teach this kid carpentry? He's going to be

the Messiah.

I should probably teach him swordplay. He's going to have to go wipe the Romans out, right? I'll send him off to fencing school or something. But Joseph just figured, well, I only have one thing to offer.

I don't know how to do anything except hammer nails. I'll teach him how to do that. And so Joseph taught Jesus carpentry.

And now Jesus applies it to his real father and himself. What he's saying essentially is, and he's following up on what he said in verse 17, my father has been working until now, and so have I. My father works on the Sabbath, and hey, how do I know what to do except to do what my father does? I'm just an apprentice son. I just do what my father shows me to do.

If you don't like what I'm doing, talk to my dad. I'm just doing it the same way he does it. I just watch him, and when I see him do something, I do the same thing.

Because I'm just learning the trade. It's not carpentry I'm learning, though. It's ministry I'm learning.

And I watch and see how my father does it, and then I do just the same thing. And I believe that we are to do the same thing, of course, because we too are sons of God, although we have an advantage. I mean, Jesus had an advantage, because I don't know in what sense he saw his father, but we have had the visible example of Jesus, as we read of him in the Gospel, showing us how he did things, and to copy his example clearly is appropriate, even if it draws criticism from religious people.

To do what Jesus did is always the right thing to do, because he did exactly what the Father does, and we're the children of the same Father. And therefore, we should do things the same way. Okay, now, when Jesus said in verse 20, in the last part there, that he, the Father, will show him, Jesus, greater works than these that you may marvel.

He doesn't clarify exactly what the greater works are, although the suggestion is from the next verse that maybe it's from the resurrection of the dead. It says, For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he will. For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son.

Now, to raise the dead and to judge are God's activities, but Jesus says he has committed those activities to his Son, just like a man, eventually after he's taught his son the tricks of the trade, commits the business to his son. The man retires and leaves it to his son to take over. So, he says, I've been learning from my father all this time.

I've been watching how he does things. I do the same things he does, and now he's basically turned the family business over to me. God's activities are raising the dead,

judging people, giving life to the dead, and he says he's committed that to me now.

He's sort of put the family business in my hands. And he's going to show you something really marvelous, probably meaning Jesus' own resurrection. But it's not at all clear what that marvelous thing is.

Now, verse 24. Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes in him who sent me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.

For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself, and has given him authority to execute judgment also, because he's the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this, for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear his voice and come forth, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of condemnation. I can of myself do nothing.

As I hear, I judge. And my judgment is righteous, because I do not seek my own will, but the will of the Father who sent me. Now, there's much here.

In fact, we could spend, I think, several hours probably on some of the points made here if we wanted to trace them throughout the rest of Scripture and dig all the things out that there is there. Obviously, we don't have the time to do that, so let me make a few observations. First of all, verses 26 and 27 are essentially a restatement of verses 21 and 22.

They talk about giving life and judging. And essentially, he says that God has given this authority to Jesus. Now, surrounding those statements in verses 24 through 30, there is discussion about the resurrection.

And the central thought in this segment, verses 24 through 30, I think the central thought is verse 25. He said, Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. Now, the reason I think that's central is because of the statement, the hour is coming, and now is.

Which, as I've pointed out to you on other occasions, he made the same statement to the woman at the well, where he said the hour is coming, and now is, when they will not worship God at Jerusalem or at this mountain, but in the Spirit and in truth. When he makes that expression, the hour is coming, and now is, he means there's two senses in which this is true. One is present, one is future.

There's a future reality I'm talking about here, but there's a sense in which it's true now, too. Okay? I'm talking about something that's going to happen, but really there's a very real sense in which it's already happening. What is it that's going to happen and is

already happening? Verse 25, people who are dead hear the voice of Jesus and come to life.

Now, the question remains, in what sense is that future, and in what sense is the now is part? Well, the now is part is in verse 24. Most assuredly I say to you, he who hears my word and believes in him who sent me has now eternal life, everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. So they were dead, now they're alive.

Why? Because they've heard my word. The statement in verse 25, the elements of it that are to come and now are, is people who are dead will hear the words and the voice of the Son of Man and will come to life. All those elements are in verse 24.

Whoever hears my words, they hear the voice of the Son of Man, they pass from death into life. But that's a spiritual thing. That's the now is part.

Even at the time when Jesus was on the earth, there were people spiritually dead, hearing the voice of Jesus and believing him came to life. And so Paul, in Ephesians chapter 2, verse 1, says that we were dead in trespasses and sins, but he's made us alive in Christ. It's a resurrection of sorts.

It's a spiritual resurrection, already happened to those who have been born again. It is, in fact, nothing other than being born again. But what about the future part, the hour that is coming? Well, that's in verse 28.

Do not marvel at this, for the hour is coming. Now notice, he said the hour is coming in verse 25, but in verse 25 he followed it with the phrase, and now is. But in verse 28 he just says the hour is coming, but he doesn't say now is.

Why? Because he's now just giving the future part, not the now is part. The present part was in verse 24. The future part is in verse 28 and 29.

Didn't marvel at this? The hour is coming, in which all who are in the graves, dead bodies, will hear his voice and come forth. Now remember the elements of verse 25. Dead people hear his voice and come alive.

That's happening spiritually now, it will happen physically later. Those who are in the graves are dead people. They hear his voice and they come forth alive.

Now, this coming forth alive involves everybody. It's a general resurrection. It says those who have done good to the resurrection of life, those who have done evil to the resurrection of condemnation.

There is not, at least in Jesus' teaching, any grounds for believing in a resurrection of believers on one occasion, and a later separate resurrection of unbelievers. Jesus

indicated that believers and unbelievers, those who have done good, those who have done evil, they all come out of the graves at the same hour. That's also consistently taught throughout the scripture, although it contrasts with dispensational teaching on the subject.

Okay, so having made those points, and looking at the clock and saying we have very little time, unfortunately, I want to go on to the remaining portion of this chapter. Verse 31. If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true.

There is another who bears witness of me. By the way, when he says, if I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true, actually the statement means if I alone am bearing witness to myself, then my witness is not true. He doesn't mean that he is forbidden to bear any witness of himself, because as soon as he does so, he proves himself to be a liar.

That's not the case. In fact, in chapter 8, in verse 13 of John, the Pharisees therefore said to him, you bear witness of yourself, your witness is not true. Okay, the very same thing he said, but he qualifies it.

That's John 8, 13. But notice his answer to them in that place. In John 8, 14, Jesus answered and said to them, even if I bear witness of myself, my witness is true, for I know where I came from and where I'm going, but you do not know where I come from or where I'm going.

You judge according to the flesh, etc., etc. But he says in verse 17, John 8, 17, it is also written in your law that the testimony of two men is true. I am one who bears witness of myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness of me.

Okay, so he says, even though I do bear witness of myself, my witness is true because I'm not alone in doing this. My Father also bears witness of me. So you've got two witnesses.

Your law itself says that the witness of two men is true, and therefore how much more the witness of a man and God. Okay, so when he says in chapter 5, verse 31, if I bear witness to myself, my witness is not true, just the opposite of what he said in chapter 8, verse 14, unless we understand in this place. He means if I alone, without any corroborating evidence, without any other witnesses, if I'm the only one bearing witness to myself, then you're right.

You have every reason to doubt my witness and to think it's not true. It's not established. The law said in the mouth of two or more witnesses, every word should be established, and if there's only one witness to me, and that's me, and there's no other witnesses, then my words are not established, and you have no obligation to believe them.

But what he's about to say is, I'm not alone in this. He says in verse 32, John 5, verse 32,

there is another who bears witness of me, and I know that the witness which he witnesses of me is true. He doesn't say who it is exactly, probably God, although he goes on to talk about John.

It may not mean that he meant John in verse 32. God bears witness of Jesus in many ways, and that's what we saw in chapter 8, verse 18. My father also bears witness.

But Jesus lists quite a long list of witnesses to himself, so that they might know that his words are established, is true. He said in verse 33, You have sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. Yet I do not receive testimony from man, but I say these things that you may be saved.

He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing for a time to rejoice in his light. But I have a greater witness than John's, for the works which the Father has given me to finish, the very works that I do bear witness of me, that the Father has sent me. And the Father himself who sent me has testified of me.

You have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his form, but you do not have his word abiding in you, because whom he sent, him you do not believe. You search the scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life, but these are they which testify of me. But you are not willing to come to me that you may have life.

I do not receive honor from men, but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in you. I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me. If another one comes in his own name, him you will receive.

How can you believe who receive honor one from another, and do not seek the honor that comes from God only? Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you, Moses, in whom you trust. For if you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me.

But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words? Now, Jesus lays out a series of witnesses to himself. Some of them he doesn't give all the... He says, I don't base my belief in myself on these witnesses. Some of them.

For instance, he says, you went to John. He bore witness to me. He bore witness to the truth about me.

Verse 34, though, he says, I don't receive the testimony of men. What he means is, I'm not basing my opinions about myself on what any man says about me, even if it's John the Baptist. I'm not basing the validity of my conclusions about this on what any man has said, but I tell you about it because I want you to believe, and I know you listen to men.

John was a bright, shiny lamp. For a while, you were willing to listen to him, initially, until he offended you, and then you stopped. But if you don't receive John now, I have a

greater witness than John.

Now, Jesus said a similar thing to when he said in verse 34, I do not receive the testimony from men. He said something similar in verse 41. I do not receive honor from men.

That doesn't mean that no one was honoring him. And it doesn't mean that he rejects it if people do honor him. What it means, however, is that his honor is not based on men's approval of him or men's testimony concerning him.

And this is in direct contrast to his critics themselves. Because he says in verse 44, How can you believe who receive honor one from another? It is honor from man. And do not seek the honor that comes only from God.

So this contrast he makes between himself and them as sort of a side issue in this whole discussion. The whole train of thought here is, there are these witnesses to me that prove I'm valid. That prove my validity.

John the Baptist, my works, the scriptures. These are witnesses to me. But sort of as an aside theme that he keeps cutting over to is, but, you know, these things, some of these witnesses, although they should matter to you, they don't matter that much to me.

Because it's not what men think. It's not whether men honor me or whatever that matters to me. But I know it matters to you.

You receive honor from men. In fact, you base your whole validity on receiving honor from men, not me. And he says, as long as you're doing that, you won't be able to receive the honor that comes only from God.

You won't be able to believe. How can you believe in me? If you're addicted to the approval of men. Paul said, I believe in Galatians chapter 1, He said, if I were seeking to please men, I should not be a servant of Christ.

That's Galatians 1.10. He says in the last part of Galatians 1.10, For if I still pleased men, I would not be a servant of Christ. Now, that can mean two things, but both of them are true. One is, if you find that men are pleased with you, you're probably not a servant of Christ.

But it can also mean, if pleasing men is what I want to do, I would have to choose a different vocation than trying to be a servant of Christ. You simply can't follow Christ and be addicted to man's approval. If you're trying to please men, if that's your priority, then you're simply not going to be able to be a believer.

You're not going to be able to be a disciple of Jesus. He said, how can you believe? We receive honor one from another and don't seek the honor that comes only from God. The

people that came to Jesus in large numbers were the ones who didn't receive any honor from man.

And the only honor they had left was that which God offered. But Jesus indicated that that's a far better place to be in. Because if you're seeking the honor from men, you're always going to be mute at times when you should speak in favor of Christ.

You'll be compromised at times when you should be radical, radically obedient to God. And therefore, if pleasing men remains a priority with you, it will hinder you from believing, Jesus implied, in verse 44 here, or from being a servant of Christ, Paul said in Galatians 1.10, which are just two different ways of saying the same thing. Now, John the Baptist was a witness, but verse 36, Jesus says, I have a greater witness than John's, for the works which the Father has given me to finish, the very works that I do bear witness of me that the Father has sent me.

Now, it's a good probability that when he talks about the works he has done, he is thinking about the miracles, referring to the miracles. Although it may not be the case. Frequently in John, the miracles of Christ are spoken of as his signs.

Remember? Many believed in him because of the signs that he performed. Nicodemus said, you must be from God because no one can do the signs that you're doing. And this was the first sign Jesus did when he turned to one of them.

This is the second sign he did in Cana after he came back. And many other signs Jesus did, which are not recorded in this book. John frequently refers to Jesus' miracles and usually refers them to signs.

Now, the works that he's talking about could be these miraculous signs, these miraculous works. But they could be more generic, just the things Jesus does. The way he lives his life.

Because that's what works means in many contexts in the scriptures. When the Bible says, faith without works is dead, works just means actions. Works just means putting feet to your profession of faith.

You say you believe something, prove it by the way you live. Prove it by your actions. The character of his works.

The fact that he was receiving sinners. The fact that he was standing for truth. And the fact that he did those kinds of things might be the very works that he's talking about.

It could be that he's thinking specifically of the miraculous works. That would, of course, be a special testimony to him. But so would it be if his works were consistently like God's works in general.



That Jesus lived a sinless life. Everything he did was righteous and good and holy, just like God. A life like that is a testimony too.

Not entirely clear whether he meant his miraculous works or just the character of his general activities. Either case, the way he lived his life and the things he did, he indicated should be further confirmation that he was telling the truth. Then he says in verse 37, The Father himself who sent me has testified of me.

You have neither heard his voice at any time or seen his form. Now, the Father has testified of me. This could be taken a lot of different ways.

In a sense, John the Baptist was certainly a prophet of God. And therefore, in sending a prophet like John the Baptist, God was bearing witness of Jesus. Or in another sense, the work which the Father has given me to do in the previous verse could be the way that God has borne witness by giving him supernatural works of attestation.

Or maybe even in the scriptures. Certainly those are the words of God. And he goes on to say the scriptures bear witness to me.

So it's not entirely clear whether he means in one of these ways or in all of these ways or in some other way. The Father bears witness. It's possible he has even yet another thing in mind.

Because God had spoken from heaven audibly. He had said, this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased at Jesus' baptism. Now, these people had not been present probably when that happened.

He says, you've never heard his voice or seen his form. But John the Baptist had heard the voice and seen the form of a dove. Seen the form of God's Spirit coming down in the form of a dove.

And Jesus might be saying, well, in addition to all these other ways that God bears witness to me, he's borne verbal, audible witness to me. His voice from heaven has borne witness to me. But you weren't there.

You didn't hear it. There are those who did, but you're not among them. Therefore, obviously you're unconvinced.

I'm not sure exactly how he means it when he says the Father himself has sent me as a testifier. Because the Father did testify to Jesus in all of the ways he mentions in this chapter. In addition to this other sense in which God actually spoke from heaven.

And that might be yet another way that he's referring to. He says in verse 38, but you do not have his word abiding in you. Because whom he sent you do not believe.

You search the Scriptures, which they did. They were great searchers of the Scriptures.

He says, for in them you think you have eternal life, but these are they which testify of me.

And the irony is you won't come to me that you might have life. The point is that they want eternal life. That's why they search the Scriptures, thinking that in searching the Scriptures they will have eternal life.

The irony is God actually has sent eternal life to them in Jesus. And the Scriptures that they're searching point to Jesus as the one to go to, so they can have eternal life. But they won't go to him so that they could have life.

This is the thing. They want eternal life. The Scriptures in fact can point them to eternal life in the sense that the Scriptures point them to Jesus.

But they want to get the life from the Scriptures without going to Jesus. They don't want, and in that sense of course they're neglecting to follow the Scriptures at all. The Scriptures are a signpost.

They are not the source of the life. They are the signpost pointing the direction to life. And the direction is pointing to Jesus.

Now in what sense did the Scriptures testify of Jesus? Well, in many senses. Of course, the prophecies of the Old Testament. He's talking about Old Testament Scriptures since they didn't have any New Testament then.

He's saying the Old Testament testifies of him. Well, there's many prophecies about Jesus. Many hundreds of prophecies about Jesus in the Old Testament.

They, in that sense...